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ABSTRACT

This report describes a broad-based, statewide program to increase full-time employment among urban high school graduates in New Jersey. The program is intended to increase students' preparation for and access to the job market. The report contains seven sections. The Introduction summarizes the problem and the State's proposal. Section 2, "Goal," describes the program's goal to place 10,000 urban high school graduates in full time jobs by 1992. Section 3, "Program Design," outlines mobilization, implementation, and placement stages of the program. Section 4, "Program Description," describes the following steps in matching available jobs with graduates: (1) enlist corporations and public agencies to locate entry-level jobs; (2) challenge high schools to produce and certify graduates as job-ready; (3) hire job coordinators to compile lists of jobs and match their requirements to students' demonstrated skills; (4) find summer jobs for students between eleventh and twelfth grade; (5) provide employability training for students; and (6) place graduates in full-time jobs. Section 5, "Timeline," presents a schedule, beginning in August 1986 and extending through June 1992, for the accomplishment of program goals. Section 6, "Program Evaluation," outlines the criteria to be used. Section 7, "Cost," presents the budget for program implementation. A brief conclusion, glossary of terms, notes, and a question and answer section are appended. (AF)

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New State Department of Education

10,000 Graduates -- 10,000 Jobs

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YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

10,000 Graduates -- 10,000 Jobs

1. Introduction

   a. The Problem

   At a time when the overall unemployment rate in the state is less than 6%, and the economic forecasts predict demand for skilled labor will out strip the supply by the year 2000, the minority youth unemployment rate hovers around 15%[1].

   There are several prevailing hypotheses to explain these opposing trends.[2] The most common hypothesis is that an urban high school education does not prepare students adequately for the labor market. Employers claim that youths entering the job market as either dropouts or graduates lack basic literacy, math, critical thinking, or occupational skills. A second hypothesis is that businesses have moved away from urban centers in such numbers that there are few, if any, entry level jobs available. A third hypothesis is that many more students are going on to technical schools and colleges, thus, they may be listed as seeking employment, but it is a temporary condition while they are in school. A fourth hypothesis is that inner-city youths have few models of employed adults and therefore lack guidance in how to find a job, present themselves to a prospective employer, or hold the job once hired. There are other causal explanations including employer racism, unattractive wages, youths' unrealistic expectations of the work place, and teenage parents' need for affordable child care. Finally, there is the suggestion that minority youth unemployment is the result of many factors combined.

   There are, further, projections of the long term impact of continued minority youth unemployment on the economy.[3] Businesses may leave in search of a better equipped work force. The incidence of crime especially among 18-20 year olds may increase. The economic underclass, marked by lack of education and income, will become a greater drain on state resources and a shrinking market for consumer goods and services. The Social Security system will collapse with too few workers paying to support the large number of aging "baby boomers."

   What can the Department of Education do to alter the future for these students and for the state? The advent of the High School Proficiency Test will, certainly, spur declining school districts to upgrade the instructional program and offer better academic preparation to students. Further, the department currently funds employment and training programs which generate job placements for out of school, failing, and disadvantaged youth.[4] Yet, the

Department of Education alone cannot make the difference for urban high school students. That is, while level of education is a primary factor in employability, other factors such as students' access to the labor market and employer incentives to hire minorities are beyond the direct influence of educators. A successful attempt to incorporate urban youth into the economic mainstream will require close cooperation among educators, government officials and the business community.

b. The Proposal

This proposal describes a broad-based, statewide program to increase full time employment among urban high school graduates. The program is intended to increase students' preparation for and access to the existing job market.

The proposal is modeled on the Boston Compact. The critical elements of the Boston Compact are:

- business/industry involvement,
- school-based improvement plans for better student preparation,
- recruitment and placement goals for summer and full time jobs.

In addition to these elements, the proposal for New Jersey includes:

- student preparation in employability skills
- high school graduation as a prerequisite for placement.

The remaining sections of the proposal cover:

- program goal
- program design
- program description
- timeline
- evaluation
- costs
- glossary of terms

2. Goal

The proposed program has only one goal -- to place 10,000 urban high school graduates in full time jobs by 1992. In order to reach this goal, urban school districts must produce 10,000 graduates by August, 1992 and the public and private employers in the state must identify 10,000 jobs by October, 1992. The graduates must be capable of performing in the jobs. The jobs must be worthy of the graduates.

The goal of 10,000 graduates and 10,000 jobs can be reached by progressively increasing the number of placements over 4 years:

1989 - 1000 placements
1990 - 2000 placements
1991 - 3000 placements
1992 - 4000 placements

An extended timeline of 6 years (1987-1992) allows two years before the first placement to set up a management system, resolve administrative problems, and develop linkages among schools and the business community. The extended timeline will also allow this program to gain recognition, acceptance and momentum among schools and businesses.

A critical factor in attaining the program goal will be the demographics of the state's urban population. Almost 25% of the 27,000 urban 9th graders in 1985-86 attended 20 high schools in Essex County. About 50% of the urban 9th graders were in schools in Essex, Hudson, and Middlesex counties.

The first year of job placement, 1989, will be considered a "pilot-project" year. A small proportion of the total urban high school senior population--1,000--will form the target group for job placements. In the interest of gathering data on program design and effectiveness in different types of communities, 1989 graduates will be drawn from representative schools in the northern and southern counties, e.g., Essex and Camden, respectively.

In subsequent years, program activities will be expanded to include more students, schools, PICs and employers. The progressive inclusion of school districts and PICs will depend on the same criteria of population size, active PIC participation, and entry level job availability.

3. Program Design

The program would proceed in three stages: mobilization, implementation, and placement. During mobilization (1987-88) public and private executives allocate resources to locate 1,000 entry level jobs. Selected school districts identify 1,000 potential graduates. During the implementation stage (1988-91) selected schools help students learn employability skills. PIC-based job coordinators and school staffs also identify summer jobs for students between the 11th and 12th grades. During the placement stage (1989-1992), job coordinators and school staff help students prepare for graduation, and for job interviews.

The program is designed to provide incentives for voluntary participation by local employers, schools and students. For employers, participation is an economical way to access a well-prepared entry-level labor force. For schools, it is a way to motivate students to attend classes and to graduate. For students, the program offers a logical, tangible outcome to the high school career and systematic assistance in finding a full time job.

With the incentives, there are tacit assurances from each partner. Employers must agree to offer jobs with opportunities for individual growth. Schools must certify to employers that student candidates have fulfilled all requirements for graduation successfully and are prepared to work. Students must demonstrate through their attitudes, behavior, attendance and achievement that they will perform well in a full-time work situation once they graduate.

This is not a proposal for charity. Employers are not obligated to hire a graduate. Schools are not obligated to recruit or recommend students. Students are not obligated to interview for or take any job. However, each partner has much to lose in the long run by not participating and much to gain by active involvement in the program.

4. Program Description

In its simplest form, the program will match urban high school graduates with entry level jobs. The jobs, and, certainly, the students already exist. However, the scope of the effort requires mobilization and coordination activities among employers, state agencies, and local school districts. The proposed process for identifying jobs and preparing graduates is as follows.

a. The 20 major employers and 20 medium and small-sized companies in New Jersey will be asked to make public pledges of resources to help identify entry-level jobs.

- In each year, the major employers in an identified region will be asked to take primary responsibility for locating entry level jobs.

- The employers can use all means at their disposal to find jobs, including appeals to suppliers, subsidiary companies, and other small businesses in the community.

- As jobs are identified each year, they will be catalogued by location, distance from urban centers, entry level skill requirements, and date of availability by staff of the local Private Industry Council.

b. Employers will not manage the program or maintain master lists of jobs. Such an arrangement increases the costs and labor required. Instead, the Private Industry Councils will be asked to fund a Job Coordinator no later than January, 1988.

c. Under the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) there are Service Delivery Areas (SDAs) across the state.[5] Within each SDA, there is a Private Industry Council (PIC) which develops training and employment programs. Through the Department of Labor, PICs serving urban areas will be asked to pay the salary of a job coordinator from the 8% of their funding legislated for youth programs. The job coordinator will manage the program activities within the SDA.

Private Industry Councils have many and varied programs to serve urban youth. The Departments of Education and Labor will be available to work with individual PICs on strategies to integrate the functions of the job coordinator in this initiative into existing programs for in-school youth.

The Job Coordinator's responsibilities will be to:

- create a data management system.
- compile and update lists of full-time jobs identified by local employers in the region.
- compile and update lists of students eligible for full time jobs.
- help eligible 11th grade students find jobs for the summer.
- arrange interview schedules for students with employers.

d. Schools will receive technical assistance from the Department of Education during mobilization and implementation stages.

Descriptions of employability skills training programs -- essentially in the areas of job preparation, job seeking, career planning and job retention -- will be provided by the Departments of Education and Labor but each district must select, schedule, staff and evaluate the training.[6] The Department of Education will make available small planning grants to districts for this purpose and hire consultants to provide planning assistance.

The Department of Education will also provide training institutes to help districts set up simple, equitable procedures for identifying, screening and monitoring students. Existing initiatives and training institutes to improve or remediate HSPT performance will continue. These latter efforts will help districts increase the numbers of eligible students. Interim reports by independent evaluators will be fed back to districts and schools as another way to improve program process and outcomes.

e. Public comprehensive high schools serving a predominantly urban or minority student population are eligible for participation (81 schools). Essentially, schools pledge to produce high school graduates who have successfully fulfilled all requirements:

- passed the HSPT,
- successfully completed all local requirements for graduation,
- registered daily attendance of 90% or better for at least their 10th grade year,
- demonstrated appropriate school behavior.

f. Employability skills training will be critical to students' success. Students need to understand the expectations of a work place such as employee behavior, conditions, compensation, rewards and means to advancement.

- Schools must certify that students have fulfilled all requirements when recommending them for interviews. In addition, schools must be able to demonstrate that students have positive attitudes toward and realistic expectations about work.

- Each school uses a $1000 NJDE start up grant to plan employability training for students. The training must be approved by Depart- ment of Education staff before it is offered to students.

- The proposal does not specify the school-based decisions, organization, or personnel necessary to manage the program in the school. However, schools will be encouraged to use existing resources, especially guidance counselors, and prior experiences, such as career awareness courses, to design, staff, implement and manage the local program.

- The school designs an employability skills course for the student candidates. Students must successfully complete employability training before graduation to be eligible for full-time jobs. Scheduling the course will be the school's responsibility.

- Schools will not be required to contact employers directly, rather, the school will have direct contact with the job coordinator.

g. Students become candidates for the program when they have passed the HSPT, made satisfactory progress toward graduation requirements, registered daily attendance of 90% or better and demonstrated appropriate behavior. The program is <u>not</u> intended for vocational education majors, special education students or drop outs since other programs exist for these populations. Students will be candidates for job interviews if they have taken the employability course, graduated from high school and shown by sustained attitude, behavior and performance a readiness for full-time employment.

h. In summary, the steps to the outcome are:

- enlist corporations and public agencies to locate entry level jobs.

- challenge high schools to produce and certify graduates as job-ready.

- hire Job Coordinators to compile lists of jobs and match job requirements to students' demonstrated skills.

- find summer jobs for students between 11th and 12th grade.

- provide employability training for students (for a minimum of 40 hours) that focuses on the general behaviors and expectations of the work place.

- place graduates in full-time jobs.

i. Promotional Activities

Unlike other Department of Education initiatives, the success of this program will depend as much on the public perception of the program as the actual executive effort. If the program is viewed as discriminating against some students or as a massive charity effort aimed at disadvantaged minority youth there will be, in all likelihood, a strong backlash. Therefore, "good news" stories about urban students' accomplishments and urban school improvements should be sent regularly to all media through the Department of Education. At the same time, messages must be transmitted via media to students about the value of a high school diploma, the efforts of state level executives, and the jobs available.

5. Timeline

The following list presents the general intended sequence of events leading to 10,000 graduates and 10,000 jobs.

August 1986	Begin planning meetings with the New Jersey Private Industry Council re: feasibility, funding, local PIC involvement.
September 1986	Meet with urban school superintendents, principals and counselors re: feasibility of recruiting and preparing students for employment.
September 1986	Proposal reworked based on input from schools and PICs.
September 1986	Proposal presented to the Governor.
October 1986	Governor convenes business sponsors.
October 1986	Governor announces program
March 1987	PICs formally invited to participate.
March 1987	School districts invited to participate. Schools identify 1000 potential graduates
October 1987	Training institute on employability skills for school staff. Districts begin identification of eligible 1989 graduates.

January 1988	Districts submit plans to Department of Education for employability course offered between Spring 1988 and Spring 1989. Independent evaluation begins.
January 1988	Job coordinators hired by PICs.
February 1988	Job coordinators begin to develop summer jobs.
May 1988	Summer placement begins for 1000.
June 1988	Schools identify 1990 graduates (2,000).
January 1989	Final count of 1989 graduates completed. Schools identify 1991 graduates (3,000).
February 1989	School staff meet with job coordinator to match student skills and job requirements. Interview schedule completed.
March 1989	Student referrals and interviews begin.
June 1989	Hiring begins for 1000 graduates. Summer placement begins for 2000 11th graders Schools identify 1991 graduates (3000).
June 1990	Summer placement for 3000 11th graders Full time placement for 2000 graduates begins Schools identify 1992 graduates (4000).
June 1991	Summer placement for 4000 11th graders. Full time placement for 3000 graduates begins.
June 1992	Full time placement for 4000 graduates begins.

6. Program Evaluation

Program evaluation over 5 years (1988-92) should be conducted by an independent contractor for two reasons. First, the necessary collection of data on the 3 program phases will be time consuming and labor intensive. Second, there is less chance of prejudgment or bias.

The program evaluation should cover the outcomes: number of graduates, number of placements in each year. The evaluators should also collect baseline and comparative data on student achievement and attendance. Process data on the school programs and school staff - job coordinator linkages will be critical in interpreting outcomes and planning the subsequent years of the program. Finally, the evaluation must include follow-up at the work sites for at least the first 2 years of implementation as a way to confirm the success of the program.

7. Costs

The majority of costs will be in-kind contributions from existing budgets, i.e., planning time, teaching staff, course materials, publicity, technical assistance. Other costs incurred in planning and implementation are as follows:

$ 81,000	Planning grants @ $1,000/school
$ 7,500	5 out-of-state consultants @ $1,500/day
$ 40,000	Independent evaluation (5 years)
$128,500	TOTAL

Conclusion

School systems must be continually encouraged to improve the educational program and the number of students who graduate. The strength of the program "10,000 Graduates: 10,000 Jobs" is the tangible link between high school graduation as an achievement and the value of this achievement to young people and employers.

Glossary of Terms:

- CEO -- Chief Executive Officer. Includes corporation presidents, state cabinet members, directors of public, independent agencies.

- Entry Level Job -- Entry level jobs are distinguished from low skill jobs. The intent of job identification activities is to find full-time placements with room for advancement, on-the-job skills training opportunities, and above minimum wage compensation. Jobs may require particular skills or aptitudes (e.g., typing, math, manual dexterity).

- Employability Skills Training -- variously referred to as employment competencies, employability training, youth employment competencies. Provides training in the general behaviors required in any work place, such as attendance, interpersonal communication and cooperation. Also gives attention to the mechanical and affective skills of finding a job and handling an interview. There are curriculums commercially available and others disseminated through educational agencies.

- Job Coordinator -- Staff person hired by Private Industry Council to provide technical assistance to employers in identifying and listing jobs and to school staff in identifying and preparing eligible students. The Job Coordinator keeps updated lists of job titles, job requirements, student credentials, and student skills. The Job Coordinator also keeps school staff apprised of entry level skill requirements of jobs and may help potential employers clarify or define the minimum job requirements.

- Placement -- Students will be considered placed when they remain in a job for 90 days (3 months), a typical probation period. Students are assured interviews but employers are not obligated to keep new employees who do not meet the expectations of the work place. Conversely, students are not obligated to stay in a job that has been misrepresented by the employer. Efforts will be made through October, 1989 to find replacement jobs or employees, where necessary.

Notes

1. Estimates of unemployment are drawn from Department of Labor statistics for 16-19 year olds. However, the unemployed are defined as people who are actively looking for work. This definition may underestimate the true number of minority teenagers who want or could hold full time jobs. As an example, for August, 1985, the unemployment rate for youth living in poverty who had not completed school was 46.3%.

2. For additional discussion of these hypotheses see: A Practitioner's Guide: Strategies, Programs and Resources for Youth Employability Development. Public/Private Ventures, Phila. 1985. Challenge to the states: the five year dilemma, July 1985. Youth education and employment, a comprehensive approach. New York State Education Department, 1982.

3. Public/Private Ventures (Philadelphia, Pa.) has done extensive investigations into the causes and effects of youth unemployment. See the report, A Practitioner's Guide (P/PV, 1985). National Alliance or Business (Washington, D.C.) Employment Policies: Looking to the Year 2000. (1986).

4. For example,

   Drop Out Centers,
   Youth Corps Programs,
   HSPT funded assistance plans,
   Co-op education.

5. Forty three of the urban high schools are in 3 counties. Five of the 17 SDAs are also in these 3 counties. It may be economical for other SDAs to share the costs and services of a job coordinator, e.g., Atlantic, Monmouth, and Ocean (total 8 schools), or Burlington and Camden (9 schools).

6. Examples of nationally validated curriculums are:

   - Experience - Based Career Education
   - Jobs for America's graduates
   - Breakaway
   - US Department of Labor employment competencies
   - Vocational education job preparation courses.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

What proof is there that jobs exist in New Jersey of the caliber, wage, and proximity to urban centers assumed in the proposal?

Projections into the 1990's by both the Department of Labor and the Office of Management and Budget indicate continued growth in the economy and in the labor market. Some occupations, in heavy manufacturing, for example, will continue to shrink in market share, but others, in construction, communications, clerical/sales, and health care will continue to grow.

Most of the jobs are not located in urban centers. Jobs are not distributed evenly throughout the state, but lessons of the past suggest that people in search of jobs will migrate to the job market. One option is to improve the intercity and city-suburban mass transportation lines. Another option is commuter buses financed by municipalities or business consortia. A third, limited alternative is to arrange low-cost car loans for employees.

How will this program affect existing job placement initiatives in Vocational Education, General and Academic Education, and local school districts?

It is unlikely that this program will monopolize all existing entry level jobs in an area.

Students participating in the 10,000 Graduates: 10,000 Jobs program will be selected from among students who are not vocational education majors. The types of employers and jobs sought by the vocational majors will not be open, for the most part, to students without vocational training.

Alternative education programs sponsored by the Division of General and Academic Education also serve a different and smaller segment of the high school population.

Some school districts have forged alliances, created adopt-a-school programs, and developed ongoing relationships with local corporations. However, in many cases, the relationships do not include systematic hiring of the school's graduates. Schools and businesses will have the option of retaining the established relationship or participating in a program which promises a larger, more diverse pool of job opportunities for graduates.

Why not use school - based vocational staff with experience and employer contacts to locate jobs, since finding the jobs for graduates will require approaches to hundreds of small companies?

The program is designed to eliminate hundreds of contacts with individual companies. Corporations will be asked to enlist mid-sized and small companies through professional and personal contacts. As jobs are identified, employers notify the job coordinator. The large corporations are expected to remain aware of the jobs found and the jobs needed across regions.

Is there any way to encourage community involvement in motivating and supporting students?

The proposal does not specify or limit the elements of the local program beyond academic preparation and employability training. Districts and schools are limited only by their own energy and ingenuity in designing the features to motivate and prepare students for employment. Certainly, involvement by community groups and parents should not be discouraged, but a school must first determine its capacity to successfully manage this type of participation.

Can the program make use of "Enterprise Zones" to attract employers and more entry level jobs to depressed urban centers?

Enterprise Zones have been designated in five cities in the state. Currently, the efforts are small and diffused. The program implementation cannot afford to depend on the Enterprise Zones to generate jobs by 1989, although attention will be given to their progress.

Do we mean entry level to "career ladders" or simply, jobs that are not "dead ends"?

The proposal refers to "entry-level jobs" not career ladders and describes these as jobs that offer room for personal growth. Advancement on merit and ability in a company will depend on the individual. On the other hand, a primary function of the program will be to identify full time jobs that offer opportunities for growth, for challenge, for advancement, and for increasing responsibility.

Will the program overburden guidance counselors? How will counselors be involved?

Guidance counselors are a logical choice to manage the program at the school level. Counselors have greater access to a greater number of students than do subject area teachers. Counselors may be better equipped to identify, select, train, and guide students. The questions of overload, of equitable distribution of the work load among staff members, should be addressed by the administrators of the district and the school.

Can students take occupational skills courses and still be eligible for the program?

Students should be encouraged to take electives that increase their academic and occupational skills; courses in advanced math and courses in typing, bookkeeping, computerized data entry, for example, should be available to all students. Vocational education majors, students who spend 3-4 periods per day in occupational training, are not eligible for this program.

Is one job coordinator enough to serve counties where there are many urban high schools?

The job coordinator's role is primarily to coordinate information about jobs supplied by employers and information about students supplied by schools.

Since the number of students placed will increase in yearly increments and expand in each year to reach more counties and schools, it is unlikely that any one coordinator will be overwhelmed.

How will the department make sure that schools keep their end of the bargain?

The program is voluntary. The Department of Education does not have the resources to monitor each school, although the department will approve plans for the employability course. The real test of each school's ability to prepare graduates will be the market place. If a school administration chooses to recommend students who have not fulfilled the prerequisities, employers will know it quickly. Job coordinators and students will know it, too, and the knowledge could affect the school's participation. In addition, there are plans for an ongoing program evaluation that will allow the department to keep track of process and outcomes.

What assurances are there that the Private Industry Councils will participate as described in the proposal?

There are no assurances. Each PIC sets its own goals and designs its own programs. However, individual PICs have cooperated with state agencies and school districts to increase youth employment using other programs and approaches. The incremental design of the proposal allows for the gradual enlistment of PICs throughout the state. In the first year of implementation, PICs in the northeastern part of the state will be asked to coordinate 1,000 jobs and 1,000 graduates.

Can other PIC employment services be folded into the resources of the program?

Certainly. The six years of implementation of this program will be a laboratory in which educators, employers, and employment services learn and develop effective ways to match workers with employers. Services such as computerized catalogs of jobs, employability training, and short term work experiences should be looked at as ways to enhance the activities and the success of the job coordinators and the program.

If jobs exist and job placement programs already exist and students will be demonstrably better prepared, is this program necessary?

The program can still serve a function, even if the most optimistic forecasts of economic growth and increased academic achievement prove true. One difficulty for urban students has been lack of knowledge about where the jobs are located and the entry level skills required. The program is intended to increase students' options in a job search, prepare students for the job interview, and increase the likelihood of job retention.

Every potential worker in the year 2001 is alive today. To do nothing, to wait for an expanding economy to absorb urban youth into the labor market, to expect employers and employees to find each other is to risk squandering the state's future. The state's economy has improved over the past 4 years but there has not been a commensurate drop in urban youth unemployment. We cannot wait. It is up to all of us to make sure that today's students are educated, productive, valued, independent adults in the next century.